

**The challenge of coaching:
Providing cohesion among
multiple reform agendas**

April 2004

Center for Collaborative Education

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Presented at AERA, San Diego

**THE PRACTICE OF COACHING: A MULTIORGANIZATIONAL
EXAMINATION OF MODELS AND CHALLENGES**

THE CHALLENGE OF COACHING: PROVIDING COHESION AMONG MULTIPLE REFORM AGENDAS

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THE CHALLENGE OF COACHING: PROVIDING COHESION AMONG MULTIPLE REFORM AGENDAS

INTRODUCTION

For much of the past decade, the federal government has supported comprehensive school reform as a way to improve under-performing schools (US Department of Education 1998). As a result, thousands of schools across the country are implementing scores of different whole school reform models with the hopes of improving school culture and raising student performance. Many of these models use external facilitators, or coaches, to guide school change. Research has shown that the stronger the coaching or design-based assistance, the higher the implementation (Rand 2002). Consistent, clear, frequent communication between coaches and teachers is a critical ingredient for successful implementation (Rand 2002). However, external facilitators of school change face multiple challenges to providing high quality, intensive coaching and communication with schools. Lieberman (2001) provides a succinct summary of the challenges and tensions of change agents to “find ways to get inside the school culture while remaining somewhat independent of it.”

The Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) is a non-profit organization that develops whole school reform models and supports schools implementing them. CCE carries out its mission of equity and democracy in schools by working collaboratively with urban schools and districts to improve student learning by promoting and facilitating models of whole school reform. Through four different reform networks, CCE coaches currently work in approximately 80 New England schools (Appendix 1).

Across CCE’s four different reform networks, there is a common CCE theory of action that provides the foundation for each reform model’s unique principles and provides cohesion among programs and coaching. The CCE theory of action includes four school-based practices and three external practices (Appendix 2):

School based practices

- Improving teaching, learning, and assessment
- Building leadership capacity and a professional collaborative culture
- Data-based inquiry and decision making
- Creating structures to support high achievement

External practices

- Developing district capacity to support school change
- Networking with like-minded schools
- Community organizing and advocacy

The CCE theory of action both guides and is informed by the work of the coach. The CCE research team has been studying the role of the coach for several years in order to understand how coaching facilitates school reform (CCE 2001; CCE 2002). The goals of the coaching studies have been to document the work of CCE and place it in the larger context of whole school reform and external facilitation of change; to understand CCE's coaching model as it plays out in schools; and to raise questions and areas for improving the support and quality of coaching at CCE.

The first study, published in January 2001, addressed the following research questions:

- How do coaches assist and enhance schools' efforts at reform? That is, what kinds of activities do coaches engage in, how do these activities facilitate change, and what do coaches think about these activities?
- How are coaches' activities grounded in CCE's core school-based practices?

The findings document coaches' strategies for entering into a school culture, their interpretations of their role, the primary goal of building a collaborative culture, and challenges to building such a culture.

In the first study, we found that CCE coaches play multiple roles in schools, including that of professional developer, meeting facilitator, mirror, guide, and teacher of teachers. Within these multiple roles, coaches must act not only as colleagues, sympathetic to the challenges of teaching, but also as authorities, guiding teachers' professional development. A coach is a "good teacher" who "engages people as learners and empowers teachers to solve their own problems" (CCE 2001), which requires navigating the tension of transmitting versus transacting the teaching and learning process. Coaches perform the important function of holding the vision of the reform for teachers, and face the challenge of simultaneously implementing multiple changes that are structural and cultural, and instructional. Coaches described a delicate balancing act between "*pushing the reform agenda and meeting the immediate needs of school staff.*"

The second study examined coaching from the perspective of school teachers and administrators and was guided by the following questions:

- How do teachers and administrators perceive the role of the coach?
- How often do teachers and administrators work with coaches, and in what contexts?
- How do teachers and administrators perceive coaching activities as helping to facilitate change?
- In what ways do teachers see coaching activities as related to the reform model?
- What barriers do teachers see in implementing the reform model?

Teachers perceived coaches as facilitating change in classroom practice, while administrators perceived coaches as critical friends who could push their thinking about school-wide change. The teachers who better understood the reform model experienced more change. For many teachers, though, the relationship between the reform model and coaching activities remained unclear. "*The challenge for the coach is to help teachers create goals specific to their needs and related to the reform model and to create plans for how those goals can be achieved*" (CCE 2002).

The findings italicized above from both previous coaching studies indicate the need to clarify, both for coaches and for teachers, what is the “reform agenda” or “reform model”?

The current study probes more deeply on defining the “reform agenda” and answering the question, “How do coaches balance pushing the reform agenda and meeting the immediate needs of school staff?” This study first teases apart what coaches mean by “reform agenda” and “immediate needs.” The term “reform agenda” has multiple owners: the district reform agenda, the principal’s reform agenda, CCE’s reform agenda, and/or the coach’s reform agenda and therefore multiple meanings. The school staff’s attitudes towards whole school change depend upon how they perceive and experience each reform agenda. This study identifies some of the “immediate needs” which potentially detract from the work of whole school change. It then describes coaches’ strategies for achieving the balance between reform and reality, the challenges faced in achieving this balance, and ways that CCE may address these challenges to develop the coaching and reform models.

METHODS

Twenty-five CCE coaches were interviewed for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Three different researchers conducted the interviews (Appendix 3). Coaches were given the choice of focusing on one school or discussing all their schools in their answers to interview questions. Coaches discussed schools in 10 different New England districts. Some coaches worked across reform models, yet talked about only one network. Their interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were coded and analyzed using HyperResearch software.

The following tables describe the interviewees and their association with various CCE reform networks.

TABLE 1: INTERVIEWEE COACHING EXPERIENCE

| CCE coaching experience | Number of coaches |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| less than 1 year | 15 |
| 1-3 years | 7 |
| 3+ years | 3 |

TABLE 2: INTERVIEWEES BY CCE REFORM MODEL

| Reform model | Number of coaches discussing schools in model |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Turning Points | 11 |
| Pilot Schools | 2 |
| Coalition of Essential Schools | 4 |
| SIMSE | 3 |
| NESSN | 5 |

LIMITATIONS

Similar to the first study, this study focuses on the perspective of the coach, not the schools in which they coach. Coaches were asked to discuss their perceptions of the schools' reform agenda and immediate needs. Also similar to the first study, most of the coaches were in their first year of coaching at CCE (15/25), interviewed after only 1-3 months of coaching. Additionally, the schools in which they were coaching were mostly in their first year with CCE.

Because there were so few coaches per reform model, no conclusions about program specificity in coaching can be drawn.

FINDINGS

A. COACHES' DEFINITION OF THE REFORM AGENDA

CCE theory of action and model principles

Coaches define their own reform agenda based on CCE's theory of action, their particular model principles, and their prior experiences. When asked about their own reform agendas, coaches named a wide variety of agendas, which researchers coded as 35 topics. While most of the codes were distinct from each other, some of these topics could be viewed as subtopics of others. For example, building a professional collaborative culture includes elements such as designing a cohesive professional development plan, instituting peer observations, and facilitating reflective conversations. There were more agendas than coaches because coaches rarely named only one reform agenda.

The codes mentioned most frequently were building a *professional collaborative culture* (13 coaches) or *implementing/operationalizing the reform model's principles* (12 coaches). All but four coaches cited either one or both of these codes as framing their coaching. Building a professional collaborative culture is a cornerstone of CCE's theory of action, one of four essential school-based practices. Professional collaborative culture means developing a community of teachers as learners who discuss curriculum and instruction with each other regularly. This finding confirms the conclusions from our first study of coaching (CCE 2001) that many coaches begin their work in schools with this goal in mind.

I think that the main focus of my work and the purpose for doing this is to enable the faculties to have the conversations that they need to be having to better improve student learning. That would involve changing the pedagogy, changing of curriculum, structural changes in terms of how meetings are run. So that goes into establishing more democratic processes within the school. I guess the main change that I do initially, and it may deepen as time goes on, [is] **to establish methods of conversation that will enable the professionals in a school to tackle the hard issues that are in front of them.**

Coaches equally as often cited the model's principles as guiding their work in schools. While CCE has a common mission and theory of action across models, each school reform network also has its own identity and specific principles and practices.

Part of the power of saying that you're a [model] school is that you are a part of a network of schools who have all said, "These are the principles that we're striving to realize in our school. And we're all doing it in different ways." So, to be a [model] school doesn't mean you look a certain way or that your school will be organized in a certain way. But

it does mean that **the decisions that you make and the way in which the school operates are all guided by these common reference points.**

Coaches help operationalize these principles so that school staffs may see their relevance.

I keep telling them it's not a program like your spelling program or your Project Read. This is a way of being at your school. But that's too nebulous. **I have to actually show them what I'm talking about in very concrete ways...**My role as a coach is, I better show them how we can begin to operationalize these principles or we don't get anywhere. They don't have time to sit there and visualize it all themselves. That's what I'm there for, I'm there to help them.

The elements of CCE's theory of action and the various reform model principles are overlapping. In other words, each reform model includes principles which relate to building a collaborative culture, using data based decision making, etc. However, some coaches seem to identify with CCE and its theory of action, while other coaches identify with their program's principles. Five coaches use language to suggest that they integrate the two.

Turning Points' focus on principal support and the leadership team

Turning Points is a whole school reform model focused on the adolescent learner. The schools which are part of Turning Points are all middle schools, encompassing mostly grades 6 through 8. Of the five CCE programs discussed in this paper, Turning Points is the only national program, and offers the most in the way of both packaged materials and annual network events.

Of the 35 different codes for coaches' reform agenda, two codes were almost exclusively cited by coaches from one CCE program, Turning Points. All other codes were represented by coaches from multiple programs. These two Turning Points specific codes were *principal support* and *leadership team focus*.

By principal support, we mean bi-directional support: coaches supporting principals *and* principals supporting the reform effort. Six out of eight coaches who discussed principal support as part of their reform agenda were Turning Points coaches. We know from our previous two coaching studies (CCE 2001, 2002) that Turning Points coaches do meet with principals regularly and frequently, mostly informally. Coaches support principals by keeping the vision of the reform at the forefront of the school's work, which is at times difficult for the principal as an insider to do.

In the other direction, we also document the key role of the principal in supporting the reform. When principals are ambivalent or resistant to the reform, the coaches' strategies to build collaborative culture and dialogue among faculty run counter to the building administration. The net effect is that the reform does not move forward.

All professionals...should be in a culture of trying to learn from each other, and sharing, and helping each other out, and not working in isolation. I meet with the principal on a weekly basis, every day I'm there. I make sure that the [leadership team] stays focused and stays on topic, on task...if you're very clear and explicit, then it's easier for the principal to appreciate those things [that you want to see happen].

Additionally, development of a leadership team was mentioned by six of the eight Turning Points coaches and only one other non-Turning Points coach. This structure plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the coaches' reform agenda across CCE networks. Coaches view the leadership team as important in setting the tone of the reform, identifying and addressing school-wide goals, and serving as a decision making body. It should be noted that NESSN coaches do meet with design teams regularly. NESSN design team composition is often different from leadership team composition, but design teams are similarly charged with moving the reform forward.

I really think the key group is the [leadership team]. They're the ones who really set the tone. I can look at the [leadership team], and if it's high functioning where they're addressing the key issues, the rest of the school would start falling in place. A weak [leadership team] is always a red flag that probably nothing much is happening. [The leadership team] kind of sets up benchmarks. The [leadership team] will say, "Well, how do we know we're achieving these goals?"

As several coaches noted, their view of the success or failure of the reform (and their coaching) was directly related to the ability of the principal and the leadership team to articulate and support the reform to their peers. In schools where principals did not understand or resisted the reform, or where the leadership teams were not functional and representative, less progress was made. The importance of the school administration to moving the reform forward is clear, and Turning Points uses both the principal and the instructional leadership team as the primary points of training and communication.

Reform agendas of equity from coaches of color

While CCE's mission and theory of action promote more equitable schools, coaching may or may not focus explicitly on the institutional biases which perpetuate inequity. For the purposes of this paper, we broadly define equity as improving access and achievement for students who have been traditionally denied opportunities and services, particularly low income students and students of color.

When CCE coaches were asked directly about coaching for equity, all coaches reported coaching for equity in a number of ways. They described coaching about specific practices and strategies, like discipline, advisories, and the use of manipulatives to address equity for different student groups. They also described being explicit with individuals and teams about observations and questions they had about race, class, expectations, and similar topics.

However, prior to asking explicitly about coaching for equity, we asked coaches about their reform agendas. We found a difference in responses from coaches of color as compared with white coaches—coaches of color were more explicit about the role of race and class in schools. While every code describing the reform agendas and indeed every reform agenda practice could be an entry point to discussing equity among school staffs, some areas are better entry points than others for examining institutional bias. The reform agenda topics of *data based decision making*, *discipline*, *standardized tests*, and *race and diversity* were ones in which coaches were explicit about race and class. We found that almost all of the instances in which data based decision making (5/6 coaches), race and diversity (3/5 coaches), and discipline (5/7 coaches) were stated as the coaches'

reform agendas, the coaches were coaches of color. Eleven of 25 coaches in this study were coaches of color.

[I am coaching] a small school that's going to serve students from different ethnic backgrounds, different learning styles. Students that are definitely considered more high risk students from the district...So I think there's definitely an interest on my part around diversity issues -- whether or not staff really recognize the racism, classism, and how personalization is even more important in situations like that because of the social issues that these students are coming from.

A few things have happened at [one] school around discipline. They decided to collect a lot of data on discipline issues...school-wide. And so we've had several sessions on looking at that data; and then making some action steps; looking, asking some questions with groups of kids [by race and class]. We looked at the teachers who were having a difficult time, and who were sending kids out a lot. And we were looking at just the volume of kids in the student support office.

To summarize this finding, all CCE coaches consider equity as central to their reform agendas. Coaches of color not only consider equity central, they also name this reform agenda more often as they talk about specific topics of the reform. They are more likely to identify events and dilemmas in schools as being related to race and class, such as learning styles and discipline.

B. DISTRICT AND SCHOOL REFORM AGENDAS

We have established that coaches enter schools with the lens of either the CCE theory of action's building a professional collaborative culture and/or implementing model principles. We now turn to the impact of the district's and school leaders' reform agendas on staff.

District reform agendas

Coaches reported a narrow focus on reform by districts (7 highly related codes). Coaches said that district reform agendas were viewed as mandates with required elements that were often quite traditional. For example, coaches describe districts as being used to a very "top down" approach to school reform; they mandate both comprehensive and programmatic changes and then have a "watchdog quality" of overseeing the implementation of those changes. Coaches described an attitude among district leaders as viewing change as necessary due to low test scores. However, to address them, district leaders were most often unwilling to consider radical change; they would rather maintain current practice with minor adjustments such as professional development workshops or clinics targeted towards specific aspects of standardized tests.

I think there's a surface level understanding of the rhetoric and there's experience in other start up, small school situations, but I think the current district level administration has the same questions that we have about what is the capacity in the school to think outside of the box. And so the district plays the game of tension between a complete overhaul of the school and the more comfortable tendency to assume that instituting new reporting requirements or the common curricula across the disciplines, or whatever, more of the same but better more of the same will somehow lead to change. And I've tried to point out to them that that is the basic definition of insanity, to continue to do the same thing over and over again and expect a different result. Yet there's the comfort zone for most school systems to be in.

The most often cited district reform agenda was to raise standardized test scores. As mandates, these district reform agendas often became the schools' reform agendas, not because of buy-in or empowerment, but because of top down pressure and threat of job loss.

There's a sort of pressure from the district for schools to increase their MCAS scores. That's really the bottom line. I feel it in every conversation I have. And we [at CCE] have conversations about diversifying the instruction, and meeting kids where they're at. Yet teachers just want to talk about where they need to be so that they can satisfy state and city requirements.

Coaches who expressed these perspectives on district reform agendas came from seven of the ten districts which CCE coaches discussed in their interviews. Clearly, schools and coaches feel the pressure of district reform agendas, most notably, the state's high stakes test. When the reform agendas are competing, progress is difficult.

School reform agendas

We also sought the definition of the school's reform agenda, as distinct from the coaches' reform agenda. We asked coaches what school staffs (not the leadership) viewed the reform agenda to be. In other words, how do coaches view teacher priorities for change? Coaches described school staff perceptions of school reform agendas in 23 ways. These school reform agendas spanned a range of topics, some in line with the coaches' reform agendas, some in line with the district reform agenda. They also spanned a range in terms of specificity, from tasks such as providing resources and tools for certain classroom practices to comprehensive school-wide change.

Coaches reported that their school staffs were bought into some of the work they were doing with them, that they viewed coaches as professional developers and people with "answers." School staffs most appreciated coaching around differentiated instruction, metacognition, the use of common planning time, and in transforming their traditional schools. These topics align with CCE's theory of action and the reform models overall.

On the other hand, a significant number of coaches described school reform agendas as overlapping with district reform agendas, including implementing *district mandates* and improving *standardized test scores*. The trickle down effect of district reform agendas is that school leaders and therefore school staff focus on a multitude of tasks and initiatives. Not surprisingly, many school reform agendas described by coaches run counter to CCE's theory of action and program principles. These include a focus on *basic skills*, *tracking*, and *standardized tests*.

While school reform agendas reported by coaches were numerous and reflective of the models, coaches also reported barriers to the work: *staff were unaware of the model* and *staff were resistant to the model*. Coaches described awareness of the school reform agenda as varied. Schools always have pockets of faculty who do know what the reform is about, but many of them do not. Faculty are often confused because of the multiple agendas playing out simultaneously.

I think it's something that they didn't vote for. They were happy being the way they were and it's tough. And there are a lot of district changes that need to happen as well for teachers to feel motivated that they can really start planning as if they can do this. They just feel like, "Okay, we know the district is not going to make these changes."

They're somewhat confused as far as what the different reform agendas are. Boston has the Six Essentials. And then we have Turning Points with the principles and practices. ... There are pockets of faculty who ... have a very clear sense of the agenda. There are other pockets of faculty who are aware of the agenda and are somewhat resistant because they see it as political nonsense that will soon pass away... "This is a wardrobe for the next few years. I'll wear this and I'll wait to change. But I won't engage deeply into it because I know it's going to change." And then there is a group of teachers who I would call clueless. They might be new, they haven't been oriented yet. Or there are teachers who're just not involved at all.

The wide diversity and lack of a common theme in coaches' reports of school reform agendas suggests that there is a lack of consistency in the schools' understanding of the models. This is not surprising given that there are multiple reform agendas impacting each school. We found that several coaches make explicit what all the reform agendas are and try to give them coherence, for themselves and for school staff, by developing matrices aligning the goals of the different initiatives. Such practices should make clearer to more school staff members how the multiple reform agendas fit together into a cohesive whole.

C. COACHES' VIEW OF SCHOOL STAFF IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Immediate needs vary widely in CCE schools

The research question addresses the balance between pushing the reform agenda and meeting the immediate needs of school staff. We have teased "reform agenda" out into three distinct reform agendas: the coach's, the school's, and the district's. We now turn to immediate needs. Why focus on immediate needs? According to Rust and Freidus (2001),

Successful change efforts are those that emerge from needs that are locally identified, appropriate to the specific context, and transformative for both individuals and institutions.

Immediate needs as perceived by coaches differed from reform agendas in that they were more specific and narrow. Immediate needs fell into four categories. Some immediate needs focus on changing the culture of the school, while others focus on changing structures and policies in the school. Another set of immediate needs listed specific practical tools for teachers to do their work. The final category of immediate needs included externally controlled topics, such as declining enrollment and standardized tests.

| Category | Immediate Need |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Culture (29*) | discipline (7) collaboration (5) issue of the day (5) respect for teachers (3) safe environment (3) diverse student population (2) multiple new initiatives (2) confidentiality (1) parent involvement (1) |
| Structure (17) | traditional schedule (4) coverage (4) cohesive professional development plan (3) leadership team (2) heterogeneous classes (2) homework accountability (1) PA interruptions (1) |
| Practical tools (12) | classroom tools (3) writing prompts (3) literacy (3) curriculum competencies (1) developing good questions (1) template for writing (1) |
| Externally controlled (18) | standardized tests (8) new teachers (3) in depth review (of the school's progress) (2) construction (1) declining enrollment (1) funding (1) reaccreditation (1) student basic content (1) |

*The number in parentheses denotes the number of coaches who mentioned the need in interviews

The category of immediate needs with the most mentions was culture. This finding aligns with our field experience and observations that in whole school change, structural changes alone will not achieve the goals of a reform. For example, simply going to block scheduling or creating common planning time for teachers will not improve teaching and learning until teachers also learn how to collaborate and change instructional practice.

Most common immediate needs are improving test scores and discipline

Coaches most frequently perceived the schools' immediate needs to be improving *standardized test scores* (8 coaches) and improving *student discipline* (7 coaches).

Faculty in some schools want to talk solely about behavior problems. Faculty in other schools view discipline as an equity concern—students from some groups are disciplined more frequently or differently than others.

My sense right now is that they are still so focused on the discipline issues that some sort of discipline-related remedial method would be their very first focus.

There's one whole piece about classroom management and behavior with kids, disciplining kids. They realized that sometimes across racial lines, they were disciplining kids differently. Some of the teachers of color were very clear about saying, "We are a lot stricter with these kids than the white teachers are because we know that we've got to keep these kids of color in line, because it's so easy for them to fall off the map."

As described above, school reform agendas, and therefore not surprisingly immediate needs, were often driven by standardized testing. The pressure of MCAS has driven school staffs to focus on the tests to the exclusion of the reform agenda.

From the few discussions I've had about MCAS with some of the grade levels, it is a concern. They're concerned about it because it's a measured test, and they're considered the underachieving school. And the way to be considered not an underachieving school in the superintendent's eyes is to start doing better on the MCAS test. So there are a number of teachers that feel like that's the number one goal for their students, for themselves, or for the school.

In my opinion, it's in opposition [to the reform agenda], but it's a reality that we can't ignore. It's in opposition because this is just one measure that is used to basically determine a student's success or failure rate, a standardized test, where that standardized test really doesn't have a whole lot of weight outside of graduation. It's also in opposition because so much focus, so much drill and kill, is put into the MCAS preparation and testing that they're not looking at performance assessments, they're not looking at changing or improving the instruction strategies. **So because of their focus on MCAS, I think that there's no true focus on teaching and learning and assessing.**

D. HOW DO COACHES RECONCILE THEIR OWN REFORM AGENDAS, DISTRICT REFORM AGENDAS, THE SCHOOLS' REFORM AGENDAS, AND IMMEDIATE NEEDS?

The findings discussed in the previous sections make clear that school staffs feel multiple pressures or agendas bearing down on them at all times. This pressure makes coaches' work for deep change more challenging. While coaches have the role of facilitating change, school staffs may view coaches as just another stakeholder to respond to. The following diagram summarizes the study's findings thus far.

While clearly the reform agendas of the coach, school, and district differed more than they coincided, coaches discussed three strategies they used to frame their roles of facilitating change in their schools. These strategies are not mutually exclusive; some coaches use multiple strategies depending on context.

They hold the vision of the reform for themselves and school staff

Coaches have the task of keeping the reform's goals in mind in the face of standardized testing and other immediate needs of teachers. They must explicitly hold the vision of the reform out in front as they work with school staff. They do so by asking questions, of

themselves and teachers, about broader goals such as *How do we help students be more effective learners, how do we collaborate, and how does this immediate need relate to the bigger picture?* They acknowledge that doing so is difficult and requires the ability to distance themselves from the school's immediate needs. As external facilitators, they have the luxury to do so when administrators and teachers can not.

I try to do it by asking questions...What would enable students to be more effective? And sometimes asking what is the deeper question? Because it sounds like MCAS is a way for students to show something that they understand and something that they don't. What are other ways that indicate that? What you're talking about is how to help students become deeper learners. And so it has implications for thinking more deeply about teaching and learning...One teacher asked, "How do we prepare our students to be successful on [MCAS] without us being pulled away from our other work and other agenda around implementing standards-based curriculum?"...I try to find a way to be interactive about that and sensitive to meeting people where they are. And having an idea myself where I'm going to go.

What they're saying is we need to figure out ways of teaching our kids mathematics. I'm thinking of the reform agenda as teaching kids deep, conceptual understanding of mathematics. They're thinking of it as we need to teach our kids basic facts in order to do better on tests. My reform agenda is much broader than that. My reform agenda has to do with the collaborative culture in the schools in order to get all kids to be able to understand mathematics.

I think different coaches deal with the idea of balancing their work in a lot of different ways...Coaches should always be aware of how much they're doing that's kind of immediate need. How significant is that immediate need? Is it a huge need or just a little detail thing? You know, for one teacher? How does meeting that immediate need help the reform agenda? Or your bigger picture? Does it or doesn't it? Or does it just use up your time? You know, we've all gotten caught in situations where we find ourselves doing things that we think-- So how did I get into this? ...You know, if you're doing it out of the goodness of your heart, that's okay. As long as it's not detracting from your ability to keep the larger picture in mind and what you're doing in this school. But I think given how much there is to be done, you know, it always detracts.

Leiberman (2001) describes this tension of the coach creating a vision for the project versus helping the school staff to develop a vision: "Coaches must excite their clients about the ideas they propose...while at the same time encouraging the group to participate in modifying and shaping the vision." When schools have strong visions to begin with, or coaches are able to help schools shape their visions, the work of whole school reform progresses. Simply holding the vision for school staff may not be enough. Coaches may need to help school staff value vision first, before the work of the reform can advance.

They reframe immediate needs in the language of the reform

Several coaches used a strategy of reframing immediate needs to align with the reform agenda. By reframing, they mean placing teachers' concerns in the context of the reform and using the language of the reform to make explicit discussion and action. For example, when teachers focus on student behavior, coaches may reframe the question as one of equity and encourage the use of data-based decision making to uncover biases in which students are being disciplined and which teachers are doing the disciplining. Other coaches may reframe discipline concerns as concerns about the larger school culture and facilitate the staff in discussions about infusing a tone of decency and respect into all

interactions. Still other coaches may reframe concerns about student behavior into discussions among teachers about how to construct curriculum so engaging to students that students behave because they are absorbed in learning.

They're focused on behavior. In the beginning of the year, I was like, I don't want to be focusing on this. But then I was able to turn it towards Turning Points saying, "Okay, what are we doing to create communities or a classroom that's inviting?" And that's helped a lot, trying to shift the focus of the conversation to that.

Another immediate need which coaches reframed for schools was improving standardized test scores. While some coaches choose to stay away from talking about MCAS, others choose not only to reframe it but also to *use* it to push the reform forward. These latter coaches want to use the interest and momentum of concern about test scores to focus on reform agenda topics like data-based decision making and higher order thinking.

MCAS is asking, "What's the taxonomy [of questions] within your classroom?" You'll find a lot of people asking very simple questions. So I've kind of tried to use MCAS to usurp it because MCAS at least gives it more of an edge. There are two levers I've used. This is a good teaching practice. And then the other lever I use is, "The reality is if a kid is doing simplistic questions in your class and is not exposed to these kind of questions in some form in their classroom, they're not going to do well on this test." I know that there's definitely a debate. [I know other coaches] just think that that's horrific, that I'm sending a mixed message. How can I use MCAS to my advantage in pushing our reform agenda?

They try to create small successes

As we found in the first coach study, a few coaches focus on building trust and credibility first, through the accomplishment of small tasks, before pushing the reform agenda. The small tasks may not be directly tied to the reform agenda, but they help the coach gain entry and trust in a school--teachers feel their concerns and struggles have been taken seriously and subsequently are more open to coaches' feedback and tools. For example, in one school teachers complained about interruptions from the public address system, so the coach worked with the administration to confine announcements to one time of day. Other coaches perform non-required services such as acquiring books, resources, and materials for their teachers.

There's some immediate needs that are really not for you to deal with, you know? And then there's some immediate needs that you can. I think it's just figuring out what the right balance is. You can be really rigid and decide "the agenda is this, and I'm here only for that." Or you could be a little more flexible from time to time and [realize that] they can't get to the reform agenda if they have all these other immediate needs that are interrupting [them].

I think in any institution, and especially in public schools that have issues -- the needs that come out are oftentimes crisis events...They need to get things off their chests... simple little things like, "Oh, I was out in the playground by myself for recess again, and I got 112 kids out there, just me." So those immediate needs aren't necessarily with the reform agenda....I think it's very important as a coach to listen to those comments and those needs and those emotions. And it's very important to address some that you think can be addressed; because I think if you can have a couple little successes in some of these things...taking those needs that aren't necessarily on the roadmap and having successes with those will allow the bigger things to actually happen. It's building up confidence and trust, and the foundation.

DISCUSSION

COACHES IDENTIFY WITH CCE'S THEORY OF ACTION

The CCE theory of action includes four school-based practices, of which building a collaborative culture is one. CCE coaches displayed high consistency in using the CCE theory of action as they enter schools. Confirming findings from the first coaching study, half of all coaches identified building collaborative culture as central to their thinking and their coaching. For staffs of schools in which the culture is historically one of isolation, building a professional collaborative culture means much more than just creating time for teachers to plan together. Coaches must focus not only on restructuring schools, they must also focus on facilitating cultural changes—how people in schools communicate, learn, and collaborate with each other (Fullan and Hargreaves 1991).

Data-based decision making, improving teaching, learning and assessment, and structures to support high achievement are the other three, equally important CCE school-based practices. The four CCE core school-based practices are interdependent. We found that six coaches named data-based decision making as central to their reform agendas. While collaborative talk *is* about teaching, learning, and assessment, they were not explicitly mentioned. Eight codes were clearly related to teaching and learning without being labeled as such. The only two structures named by coaches as part of their reform agendas were leadership teams and peer observation.

The secondary importance of data-based decision making, improving teaching, learning and assessment, and structures in coaches' reform agenda raises questions—developmentally, must these school-based practices occur after building a professional collaborative culture? If so, we would expect coaches in their third and fourth consecutive years in schools to talk differently about these elements of the theory of action than first and second year coaches. Future research on coaches who have worked at CCE schools for multiple years will inform this question.

Changing the culture of schools to become more collaborative depends upon some of these other school-based practices to occur, particularly the structures such as common planning time during which teachers can talk, work, and share together. Our findings suggest that CCE coaches would be able to push their reform agendas more effectively if they were able to simultaneously implement smaller learning communities, heterogeneous grouping, and common planning time in the schools earlier in the reform process. The ability of a coach to simultaneously facilitate structural and cultural changes is a challenge that all coaches face.

Our data suggests that CCE coaches do not attempt to build schools' capacity in all four school-based practices at the same time. CCE must do more work in developing expertise in these other school based practices. The collaborative discussions should explicitly focus on teaching, learning, and assessment. Data-based decision making and improving teaching, learning, and assessment provide the content of building a professional collaborative culture. It is difficult to deeply change school culture without changes in structures such as tracking and short instructional blocks of time. The

research team needs to document more examples of how the four cornerstones of the theory of action overlap and interplay, and whether in such instances deeper change occurs.

SOME CCE COACHES DO NOT EXPLICITLY CONNECT COACHING WITH THEIR REFORM MODELS

While half of coaches interviewed noted that their own reform agendas are to implement and operationalize their respective reform model's principles, several coaches consciously did *not* name for their schools the connection between coaching and the reform model name.

Coaches who identify strongly with a reform model exemplify a pride in their association with the model's name and with the other schools in the network. Some model developers and support organizations such as New American Schools would argue that such affiliation with a model is important for the success of the model.

However, several coaches discussed their rationale for *not* making explicit the connection between their work in schools and the reform model's name.

I don't think it's about [model name] at all. I don't even trot it out as [model name] because that doesn't sit well with me at all. It's not my model or whatever. It's what feels like the right thing to do for the kids to get the school going.

I tend to push a broader view. And I tend to push the tools that I've become very acquainted with -- protocols and tools, and peer observations. I tend to really push that irregardless of whether somebody believes or is cognizant of the fact that that's actually part of the reform model. It's like, "I don't care if you don't know this is reform." I'm always a little worried in working with schools as defining the work of CCE whether it's NESSN or CES or Turning Points, or anything, as an initiative. I don't like to use that word "initiative" because initiative leaves a bad taste in these teachers' mouths. It's somebody telling you, "Your old curriculum [is outdated] and this new one is going to be what you're going to use starting yesterday." That's how they interpret initiatives. So I think I've been more hesitant to really define what the reform is.

The coaches who ascribe to the idea that "pushing" the reform model will result in alienating school staffs argue that 1) teachers do not have the larger vision for the work in mind; 2) there is little or no buy-in for the work or change. These coaches have little expectation that school staffs will take ownership for the reform work. On the other hand, these coaches 1) may not be grounded in the model or team principles; 2) do not provide a larger vision for the work beyond the activities he/she facilitates; or 3) work with the school may feel like just another initiative without the validity of a name or research-based model. CCE staff should have an open discussion about this difference in attitudes towards naming or labeling the work.

SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF FACULTY IN MANY CCE SCHOOLS DO NOT IDENTIFY WITH THEIR REFORM MODELS

A significant number of coaches perceived at least parts of school staffs to be unaware of the reform or resistant to it. Our findings suggest two possible reasons for this disconnect.

One, school staffs feel too many agendas bearing down on them, pressuring them to account for their work in ways that are inauthentic or not self-initiated. They feel pressure from coaches, from their principals, and from their districts. They do not understand, and coaches do not clarify to their satisfaction, the ways in which the various reform agendas are related or synergistic.

Two, some coaches may not be explicit about the reform. Because of their sensitivity to meeting schools where they are and not overburdening them with multiple initiatives, they may respond to the school's needs in ways which align with the reform agenda without naming the model as providing the framework for such change.

I walk in and there's like a million things going on, and I can't even find the principal. Which in a way is good, because she's out there, she's in the mix, she knows what's going on. But sometimes I wonder how really important is this work? I mean, I feel it's important. I feel that it's the thing that helps the school hang together. It's the underlying philosophy of who they are. And it fits who they are. But if I were to ask a new faculty member, "What's the [model]?" I think they'd be hard pressed to really define it.

I've never gone into a school and heard, "Well, I'm a Turning Points school." I don't know why that is. I have no idea. All I know is that of all my schools, the ones that are Turning Points, and the coaches that are Turning Points are phenomenal. But each one of them say to me, "I have to do another overview of what Turning Points is." The schools aren't clear what they voted for. They don't have a clear definition of what Turning Points is.

Both reasons could be addressed by coaches emphasizing the umbrella nature of whole school reform. CCE's models embrace many different initiatives but give them cohesion by helping schools operate based on a set of common principles and practices. Simple messages and easily encapsulated visions may help accomplish this.

Schools are often unaware of the advantage of affiliating with a network of like-minded schools. Not wanting to be a part of another "initiative" is understandable for overburdened school staffs. However, coaches could encourage participation in a network of like-minded schools rather than focus on "initiative" as a way for school staffs to experience the sharing and empowerment of other participants in whole school reform. For example, some school reform models sponsor annual conferences and meetings in which school staff members share best practices with other schools around the country. Other school reform models provide opportunities for people in similar roles within the reform to share ideas and strategies, as a way to reduce isolation, especially for leaders such as principals and superintendents. When people feel part of a larger whole, they feel that their work is for a bigger cause than what touches them on a day-to-day basis. They become more invested in the reform. They feel part of a community which energizes them.

THE COACHES' ROLE OF SUPPORTING THE SCHOOL'S LEADERSHIP IS INSTRUMENTAL IN DRIVING THE REFORM

CCE's field experience and evidence from multiple comprehensive school reform initiatives nationwide support the crucial role of the principal and teacher leaders in whole school reform (Rand 2002; Stringfield 2000; Fullan 1991). The CCE programs in which coaches talked about building leadership capacity through instructional leadership teams were Turning Points and NESSN. The Turning Points model uses both the principal and the instructional leadership team as the primary points of facilitation and communication. NESSN also stresses leadership support through design teams. As several coaches noted, their view of the success or failure of the reform (and their coaching) was directly related to the ability of the principal and the leadership team to articulate and support the reform to their peers. In schools where principals did not understand or resisted the reform, or where the leadership teams were not functional and representative, the school made less progress in implementing the model.

While other models also value administrative buy in, do they emphasize as strongly the structures and practices that Turning Points and NESSN do? Are Turning Points and NESSN more prescriptive than the other models about building leadership capacity?

How do our models and roadmaps make explicit support for principals? How do we establish both informal and formal coaches' relationships with principals?

CCE COACHES DEVELOP CAPACITY TO EMBED EQUITY IN ALL PRACTICES

Coach study 2 found that despite equity's prominence in CCE's mission and theory of action and the urgent need for a focus on equity in school reform, equity was not an explicit focus of coaching. This study found that equity is central to coaching and that almost all coaches are engaged in equity work. However, this study's finding that more coaches of color than white coaches spontaneously discussed their equity work (or labeled their work in their own minds as equity work) adds to questions about how to develop capacity at CCE in coaching for equity. Why are coaches of color more represented as those who view the reform agendas as being *about* equity? Why are they more explicit about it? Do they have more perspective, language, or credibility than other coaches in this area? Do those coaches who are explicit about coaching for equity coach differently?

Over the last three years, CCE has continuously addressed equity through the formation of a Diversity Committee, the engagement of external consultants, and the use of retreat days to work as a whole staff on how to embed equity in our practices. Our Diversity Initiative grant allows us to grow as individuals and an organization on two fronts. First, we continue on our own personal journeys, understanding the ways in which our identities influence our thinking and actions about education. Second, we share our equity-focused coaching work in schools, helping school staffs understand their cultural biases and expectations of students in their schools. CCE must continue this explicit

focus on equity in order for conversations to reach more coaches and touch the daily work in concrete and meaningful ways.

DISTRICTS MUST ACTIVELY SUPPORT SCHOOLS' REFORM EFFORTS

CCE coaches report that their work is more successful in districts where the district administration are actively supporting the reform work. The Rand study of NAS implementation found that implementation was higher in districts that had stable leadership supportive of whole school reform and ample resources dedicated to its implementation (2002). In districts characterized by poorly defined reform agendas and a sole focus on high stakes testing, the barriers to high level implementation were many.

In this study, we document coaches' perceptions that the district reform agendas do not align with the coaches' reform agendas. Districts in which CCE coaches work are not supporting the reform efforts, despite their good intentions. Rather, their top down mandates often run counter to the reform efforts. For example, some districts require schools to implement specific programs and whole school reform models, resulting in schools feeling overburdened to implement multiple new initiatives each year. Other districts adopt the CCE models without full understanding of how to support their implementation. Many districts are under state pressure to improve standardized test scores, forcing schools to focus on that immediate need rather than on improving student engagement and learning. In order for coaches to succeed in facilitating whole school reform, districts must be in the role of supporting schools in the work.

CCE has done some work to assure that the districts in which we coach are not only aware of the coaching activities, but also supportive in explicit ways. Our CCE field accountability document (9/02) requires that:

For each district in which we are working with a school, the respective program director and coaches should conduct at least one meeting per year with the superintendent, district managers, and principals to assess the progress of each school and of CCE's support to the school, and discuss the role of the district in supporting the schools. For districts with schools in which we are just beginning, this meeting should occur at the beginning of the school year. The program director will take the lead in setting up and facilitating these meetings.

Most coaches report that they do not advocate for their models at the district level. Rather, this role is one assumed by program directors and the executive director. This finding confirms conclusions in coach study 2, that CCE program directors must work to create conditions within the district that support the reform. How could CCE staff pay closer, more explicit attention to our relationship with each district?

Each district context is different, as is the route by which CCE becomes involved with a district and its schools. In a few cases, teacher leaders provide the force for change. In some cases, principals of schools approach CCE for guidance and choose a CCE reform model. In some other cases, districts choose reform models for the schools. When implementation of a reform model is a district mandate, schools may not be bought in or have full understanding of how such a program will help their schools. When schools choose a reform model, districts may not be as supportive as they can be. It might be

helpful for the CCE staff to have a discussion about what minimal requirements there should be for CCE to work with a district. In other words, how must the district support whole school reform implementations?

COACHES RESPOND TO SCHOOLS' FOCUS ON STANDARDIZED TESTING AND DISCIPLINE

While CCE does not view standardized testing and discipline as the essence of reform, the reality of school life is captured by these two recurring concerns. These immediate needs tend to unduly influence any whole school reform agenda. School staffs often feel that no reforms can have a hope of taking place when these concerns govern the daily happenings in a school. Therefore, coaches must figure out how to validate the immediate concerns of school staffs while keeping the vision and practices of the reform agenda central to their day-to-day work.

Given the almost constant pressure to focus on these issues, coaches face a challenge. How do they navigate these very real concerns which run counter to the language and philosophy of the reform models? Should our models more explicitly address testing and discipline? CCE has a board-approved CCE statement on MCAS, which supports the development of multiple assessments.

The Center for Collaborative Education affirms that the current MCAS is a test and not a comprehensive assessment system, that a single score on a test should never stand as the sole measure of a student's knowledge, understandings, performance, and intellectual habits, that the use of a test for high stakes decisions is not educationally defensible, and that more appropriate accountability systems are possible. With this in mind, the Center should begin working with a cross section of schools and districts to develop a more comprehensive system of assessment to demonstrate the richer possibilities for supporting good education and accountability.

This statement implies that coaching should focus on supporting schools in developing more authentic assessment systems. However, the current political atmosphere, with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the development of high stakes tests in 28 states (EdWeek 2003), necessitates that coaches must face the focus on "results" as measured by standardized tests. Sharing coaching strategies for changing the focus from test results to what we truly want our students to know and be able to do would increase expertise on these topics. Our findings suggest that a major strategy coaches use to address these topics in the language of reform is to *reframe* them for teachers by asking deeper questions about teaching and learning, through seminars and text-based discussions.

We should note that the issue of standardized tests did not surface in Pilot Schools or NESSN schools. Perhaps the autonomy afforded Pilot Schools, and that they were founded as vision-driven schools, makes them better able to maintain their focus on improving teaching, learning, and assessment. Intended or not, in those Pilot Schools in which students took the MCAS, the students did as well or better than more traditional schools, making it more of a non-issue than for under-performing schools. A different explanation holds for NESSN schools and the perceived lack of concern about

standardized testing as reported by coaches. Coaches' interactions with school staffs were at the level of designing small schools, not yet implementing them.

SOME COACHES PUSH EARLIER AND MORE FORCEFULLY FOR REFORM THAN OTHERS

In CCE, there are two ends to the spectrum of coaching: 1) building a professional collaborative culture before pushing other aspects of reform; and 2) pushing all aspects of the theory of action and model principles simultaneously. How much do coaches “push” schools in a particular direction or action? How much do coaches allow schools to come to their own conclusions about their paths to reform? Our interviews and observations suggest that coaches range across a spectrum of views on this topic.

CCE and its programs have collaboratively developed many tools and procedures that guide our whole school reform work. For example, documents such as the CCE mission, theory of action, program benchmarks, and program roadmaps all give coaches landmarks to use as they help move schools towards the model's vision. Ideally, schools embrace a reform model and, with the coaches' facilitation, work towards actualizing that vision, based on the school's identified challenges, needs, and benchmarks ratings. The external facilitation assists the school to make progress by ensuring that meetings are effective and action steps are documented and achieved. The coach provides the expertise and “push” to keep school staffs on track when they would otherwise be sidetracked or deterred from making real change. Each coach's school portfolio includes goals based on helping the school achieve its goals.

Some coaches would argue that in the first year in a school, coaching should focus on building trust and buy-in for the reform model (CCE, 2001). Several pre-requisites must be in place once the trust has been established: 1) teachers have time to meet with each other (common planning time); 2) teachers know how to talk with one another—professional collaborative culture; 3) teachers understand how the multiple initiatives going on in a school fit together under the umbrella of whole school reform. Many coaches argue that they can not press the reform model with faculties when they have not established these prerequisites first, that doing so without buy-in would be futile.

This tension, of the coach pushing the reform agenda versus building buy-in first, has been described by Lieberman as the tension of the coach as colleague versus the coach as an authority (1999):

Negotiating this tension requires an awareness that building a community must involve the participants in helping to create their own improvement plans, while at the same time providing the knowledge and leadership to move the group forward.

Another way to view the tension is to think about the two modes of teaching, transmitting versus transacting knowledge (Lieberman 1999):

Those who tell all the time lose their audience, yet those that only engage people, without providing some kind of conceptual basis for learning, lose their clients too. Teaching is both transmitting and engaging in transactional learning. But the tough part is knowing when to do which.

CCE now has multiple schools in which the coach is at least in his/her second year in the same school. In these cases, have we moved beyond trust and buy-in, and started to have deeper conversations about teaching and learning? If schools are still not at the place to do so, is it up to the coach to then push? How can coaches feel more comfortable pushing? Might pushing early create enough change that trust happens concurrently with change, rather than before it?

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APPENDIX 1: CCE NETWORKS

Boston Pilot Schools Network: These 13 schools, while members of the Boston Public Schools, have freedom over budget, staffing, governance, curriculum/assessment, and the school calendar. Models for the future of urban public schools, the Pilot Schools are all small, personalized, and democratic. The Center serves as the coordinating organization for the Pilot Schools.

Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) Network: The Center serves as the state-wide regional center for those schools affiliated with the national Coalition of Essential Schools reform initiative. Coalition schools organize learning, teaching, and assessment around ten common principles, including students learning to use their minds well, “less is more,” personalization, student as worker, and exhibitions as demonstration of mastery. Currently, there are 35-40 Coalition-affiliated schools in the state.

National Turning Points Network: The Center for Collaborative Education serves as the National Turning Points Center, a national, New American Schools-recognized reform model for creating high-performing middle schools, based on the principles and practices for effective middle schools outlined in the national Turning Points report (Carnegie Corporation, 1989). Member schools engage in improving learning, teaching, and assessment, building a professional collaborative culture, data-based inquiry and decision making, and creating structures that support high achievement and personal development. The Center also coordinates a **New England Turning Points Network** of 25 schools, which serves as a lab site for the national network, as well as a growing national network of five other regional centers that support Turning Points schools.

New England Small Schools Network (NESSN): This network assists New England and upstate New York districts to start up new small secondary schools or to divide large comprehensive schools into smaller, autonomous schools. The Center’s work is built on the mounting evidence that small, personalized, and democratic schools are more effective in educating the diverse range of students we serve than are large, more impersonal schools. The Center will assist in the creation of up to 35 new small schools over the next five years, and operate as a clearinghouse of information and resources on the small schools movement.

APPENDIX 2: CCE MISSION AND THEORY OF ACTION

MISSION

The mission of the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) is to improve student learning in K-12 public schools and districts by promoting educational reform that is focused on school and system-wide change. The Center seeks to influence the larger public's view on education to better support change that fosters democratic and equitable schools. The Center for Collaborative Education's goal is to be a resource and catalyst for the creation of autonomous and flexible schools in which:

- Equity and diversity are embedded in all practices,
- Teaching and learning is purposeful, challenging, and has value beyond school,
- Assessment demonstrates the competence of students in multiple ways,
- Students and teachers know each other well,
- Democratic values are nurtured and modeled,
- Decisions are made as close to the learner as possible, and
- Collaborative practices improve teaching and learning.

THEORY IN ACTION:

In order to improve and sustain student learning, we believe a school community has the best chance for success if it is committed to the following processes:

- Creating a unifying vision focused on equity and excellence,
- Engaging all members of the community in a culture of equity and collaboration,
- Focusing on improving learning and teaching, and assessing learning in multiple ways,
- Practicing the habits of reflecting and questioning,
- Networking with other schools pursuing reform and restructuring,
- Establishing flexibility and autonomy, and
- Seeking support from external sources.

Sustainable change in schools demands high expectations for each student, high quality teaching, a challenging curriculum toward the goal of leading a purposeful and meaningful life, and an explicit focus on improving learning across race, income, special needs, gender, and sexual orientation groups. As well, schools have the best chance to be successful with all students if they are small, personalized, and have control over their resources.

The Center believes that school change is facilitated by collaborative work with schools in the following six practices. This collaborative work includes onsite coaching, professional development, and teacher collaboration.

School-based Practices

(1) **Improving Learning, Teaching, and Assessment:** Student learning deepens when there is a continual focus on setting high expectations for each and every student, on high quality instruction, and on providing ongoing support for teachers to improve their practice of teaching and assessing student learning. This process includes:

- Establishing competencies of what students should know and be able to do, and making them public,
- Ensuring teaching and learning is meaningful, challenging, and has value beyond school,

- Designing the curriculum so that students and the school contribute to creating an equitable and just society,
- Adopting effective approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy to all students,
- Promoting habits of mind that create life-long learners and democratic citizens,
- Looking collaboratively at student work to assess student progress and improve instruction, and
- Developing authentic and reliable assessments (e.g., rubrics, exhibitions, portfolios, exemplars), with clear performance criteria for each student.

(2) **Building Leadership Capacity and a Professional Collaborative Culture:** Schools require strong, shared leadership to promote a professional collaborative culture. Schools in which faculty interaction is collaborative and critical, and teacher talk and work is focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, have experienced strong improvements in student achievement. This process involves:

- Creating a democratic school community, including shared decision making through a representative leadership team making decisions about high impact issues affecting learning, teaching, and assessment,
- Building a professional culture committed to equity and excellence, in which the school strives to have every student learning at high levels, with particular attention paid to ensuring consistent achievement across race, ethnic, income, gender, and sexual orientation groups,
- Fostering the skills and practices of strong leadership among administrators and teachers to manage and facilitate change, and to stay focused on teaching and learning,
- Using common planning time to discuss teaching and learning, and
- Embedding professional development in the daily practices of the school, including action research, peer observation, and looking at student and teacher work.

(3) **Data-Based Inquiry and Decision Making:** Ongoing analysis of data from multiple sources provides a comprehensive picture of a school's strengths and challenges. A critical goal of this process is to determine how to best meet the needs of all learners, across race, income, gender, special needs, and language. Participation in this inquiry process by the school community results in thoughtful decisions for improvement. This process includes:

- Setting a vision for the school,
- Ongoing collection and analysis of multiple sources of data, honoring varied methodology, including ethnography and case study, through the lens of race, ethnicity, gender, and class,
- Analysis of the differences between vision and reality, and
- Inquiry into priority areas for change that most impact learning, teaching, and assessment, leading to a plan of action.

(4) **Creating Structures to Support High Achievement:** Effective schools create structures that promote the conditions for quality, equitable learning and teaching experiences, in which each student is known well. This process includes:

- Fostering school cultures of decency, trust, and respect,
- Establishing small personalized learning communities, as well as advisories and other structures which promote supportive adult-student relationships,
- Lowering student-teacher loads (no more than 80:1 secondary and 20:1 elementary)
- Creating student grouping that is primarily heterogeneous, while allowing for flexible grouping to address temporary needs or interests
- Building student, family, and community partnerships, including greater involvement in decision making and learning,
- Creating structures that empower students to participate in democratic classrooms and the school community, and to take greater responsibility and ownership for their learning, and
- Creating common planning time for faculty teams.

External Practices

(5) **Developing District Capacity to Support School Change:** Schools have a greater chance of deepening and sustaining student learning if the districts in which they reside are engaged in supporting each school's reform efforts. This includes the following:

- Collaborating with the district to provide flexibility and autonomy to each school (e.g., freedom over budgets, staffing, curriculum, governance, and the school calendar), and
- Building the district capacity to better support whole school change (e.g., developing vision, training coaches, redirecting resources).

(6) **Networking:** Participation in a network in which schools are engaged in professional, collaborative relationships greatly strengthens each school's effort to improve learning and teaching. This process includes:

- Network meetings for leadership teams to share and problem solve,
- Institutes on leadership, learning, teaching, and assessment,
- Collaborative visits from other schools to provide feedback on key issues of learning, teaching, and assessment, and
- Forums to influence the public's support for democratic and equitable schools.

(7) **Advocacy:** Schools have a better chance of achieving and sustaining gains if they engage the wider community in supporting their work. This process includes:

- Organizing political, community, school committee, teacher union, and business support for the reform effort
- Publicizing the advantages, progress, and achievements of the reform initiative

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Demographics:

- How many years have you been a coach- here and at other organizations?
- How many schools do you coach?
- How long have you coached at the school?
- How many other CCE staff coach in this school?
- How did CCE come to work with this school/district? If there was groundwork in the school/district before the school received a coach, what was it?

Definition of the “reform agenda”:

- How do you define the ‘reform agenda’? /What is your definition of the reform agenda? (coach’s definition)
- How does your school(s) define the ‘reform agenda’? /What is the school’s definition of the reform agenda? How committed is the faculty to the ‘reform agenda’?
- Does the faculty equate your work as a coach with the reform agenda?
- How do you work with teachers who are at different levels in their practice? In their understanding of the reform agenda?
- Do you think it’s important that a school see itself as a (TP or CES or whatever model) school?

Needs of the school:

- What are some of the “immediate needs” of the school(s)?
- Are they aligned with or opposed to the reform agenda? How?
- Do teachers and/or administrators perceive the school’s “immediate needs” to be aligned with or opposed to the reform agenda? How?

Development of school-wide goals:

- Does your school(s) have a defined mission/vision?
- How are your school’s short term goals related to the reform model agenda? (What was your role in shaping them?)
- How are your school’s long term goals related to the reform model agenda? (What was your role in shaping them?)
- Do you try to ensure alignment of the goals of the principal, district, and school team, Title I, CSRD, with the principles of the reform model? How? Please think of your role in the context of all these different, sometimes competing, interests.
- What is the extent to which you advocate with the district to create capacity for change?

Specific Activities:

- Do you spend time working on things that feel like they are counter to the ideals of the model? If yes, describe what those things are.
- How do you say “no” when expectations from the school are inappropriate to your role?
- Are issues of race, class, language, culture, and diversity part of the reform agenda? If so, how do you help staff discuss them?